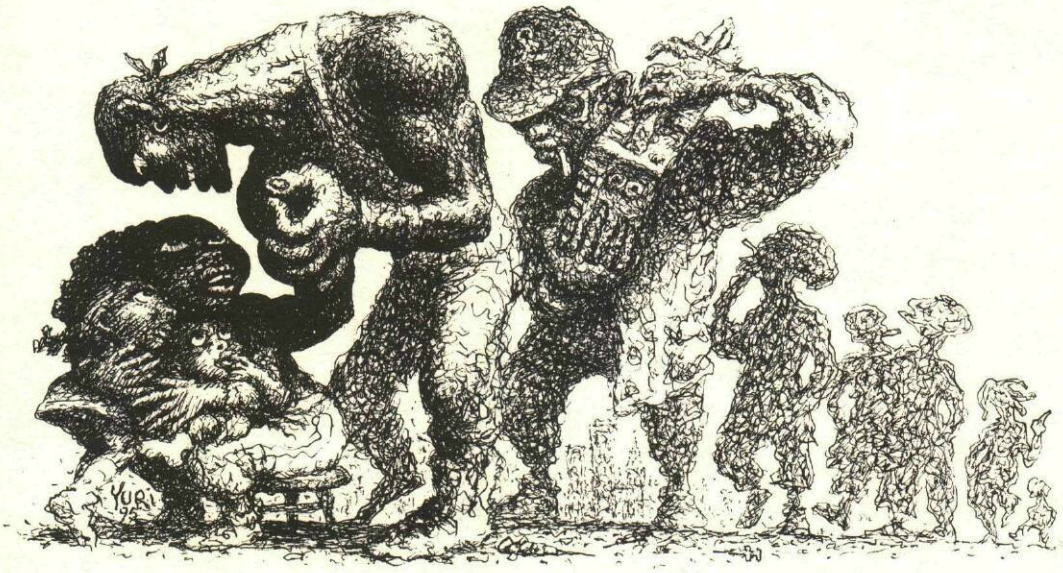
Summer 1995 ◆ Number 4

The Women's Quarterly



Do the Wrong Thing

Camille Harper, who lives in a Chicago crack neighborhood, describes how government money to aid the poor instead helps gangs control the poor

Crack! Was that a shot? I scrambled to the floor and jerked the lamp plug from its socket. I heard muffled voices and objects being moved. Footsteps moved away and there was silence.

The silence lasted. And lasted.

I crawled to the living room door and peered through the space where the door didn't meet the frame: no one. I reached for the knob and eased the door open an inch. The door to the apartment across the hall hung crazily from a bottom hinge. Light from the apartment showed an empty hall. Still, I hesitated. The tenants of the apartment were heavy drug dealers. I had a "survival contract" with them: They had offered me $300 a week to hide their stash. The offer wasn't serious. What it really meant was, "Take it and become a part of us or else keep quiet."

I had chosen the "or else." So I knew that whatever had been going on — robbery, deal gone bad — wasn't directed at me. But bullets don't respect agreements; it was safer to be sure.

I stepped into the hall and peeked into the apartment. It was a mess. But one item wasn't a mess: the neat rectangle, some two feet wide by a foot-and-a-half high, cut in the wall where a picture had once hung. The picture was now on the floor. I slipped back to my apartment and locked the door. But I did not relax until the drug dealer knocked on my door to apologize for the trouble and ask if I had been disturbed. I assured him that I had slept through the whole affair.

Still, I knew my time to move was fast approaching. Four years is as long as any honest tenant is safe in a crack house; after that, the tenant knows too much. In my case, I didn't like what the "survival contract" did to my integrity. I am a 59-year-old former schoolteacher, now severely disabled. I lived then — as I do now — in what is known as a "Section 8" apartment (my rent is federally subsidized under

Please turn to page 21

Drawing by Yuri Kolyadenko

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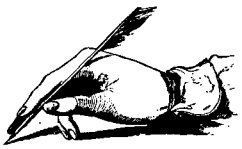
Diary



Saving People From Themselves

IN MY TEENS, I had a friend whose mother belonged to a nearly extinct species of woman: She didn't work but maintained a full-time career as an "enforcer" of *petit-bourgeois* behavior. In this, she was highly successful.

It is her censorious voice I still hear when I don't instantly leap to give my subway seat to an elderly person, or when I forget to write a thank-you note. While my friend's mother was neither wealthy nor cultivated, her most devastating pronouncement was to call something "common," as in, "Her dress is common" or "Don't wear your hair like that. It looks common." That one word could rein in any regrettable impulse in two balky teenage girls.

In truth, of course, the social order my friend's mother was defending had collapsed long before. Her standards seemed quaint, often ridiculous. But I have to say I miss them — I miss those women whose disapproving glares carried the weight of ten policeman and whose rigid enforcement of decorum did more for public order than any government program.

This is not to say that social arbiters have vanished altogether. But those who do set themselves up as arbiters today tend to subvert the very standards they purport to uphold. I think chiefly of Martha Stewart, who has created quite an industry out of declaring herself the most tasteful person in the country. In her books, her eponymous magazine, and her instructional television appearances, she burbles with confident advice for every occasion in a person's life: You can have a Martha Stewart baby shower and a Martha Stewart wedding; a Martha Stewart house and Martha Stewart dinner parties (I await her volume on funerals — surely in the works — so I will know how to die in good taste).

And yet as relentlessly encompassing as Martha Stewart's vision is — as relentless, in its way, as that of my friend's mother — it ultimately fails in the arbiter's necessary goal: which is to make people behave better. Martha Stewart only wants her followers to *feel* better — by expressing themselves in lavish decor and elaborate meals. She rummages through traditions as if they were big tag sales, seizing upon what pleases her (the Christmas feast), junking what doesn't (the church part), and always managing to find some cute historical knickknack to dust off and put on display (Victorian tree ornaments). In her universe, religious holidays become a useful excuse to show off one's baking; weddings are opportunities to reveal one's genius at floral arrangements.

Perhaps what Martha Stewart believes, if she believes anything at all, is that by beautifying our surroundings better behavior will follow. But as every generation until our own has understood, in order to behave better people require more guidance than instructions on paint color or glazing fruit. Martha Stewart will not prevent you from showing off or saying the wrong thing; she will not tell you a dress is too tarty or that you *must* invite Aunt Gertrude even though you loathe her. She will not, in short, save you from yourself.

ON MY DESK sits the 1955 edition of Emily Post's *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage.* Reading her book now, in all its strictness and minutiae, one feels like a peasant in the Middle Ages stumbling upon a volume of Roman law.

Emily Post understood what today's Martha Stewarts do not: that style and manners are a subset of morality. To Post, our morality is revealed in even our most trivial habits, from the way we introduce ourselves to the order in which we clear the plates. She believes that traditional etiquette — "the findings of long experience handed down for reasons of practical use" — must always be followed because even the morally wisest person cannot be trusted to know instinctively what to do at all times. While Martha Stewart idolizes self-expression, Post worships two other gods: self-restraint and consideration for the feelings of others.

Invited to another's house? "No matter how much the hours or food may upset you," she writes, "you must appear blissfully content." The "Great American Rudeness" is committed by "the hostess who helps herself first when a guest is seated at her table." When setting the table for a formal dinner, napkins are folded plainly and placed on the plate: "to put the napkin at the side of an empty plate in order to display it is very much like wearing a ring over a glove." The secret of popularity is "unconsciousness of self, enthusiastic interest in almost anything that turns up, and inward generosity of thought and impulse outwardly expressed in good manners." A suggestion for Martha Stewart? "At the very moment we set ourselves up with an 'I am better than Thou' attitude, we become intolerable to others as we ourselves are intolerant."

If Post seems antiquated and comic, it is because she believes that civilization rests upon the observance of small, arbitrary rules whose logic is often elusive. But to Post — a true Burkean! — mysteriousness doesn't render the rules pointless; it just proves we need to try harder to comprehend them. For people like my friend's mother — who understood the rules maybe the least of anyone but followed them devoutly all the same — they formed a comforting barricade between her and lower-class barbarism; whatever else she was, at least she wasn't common. Funny, Martha Stewart tries to prove the same thing, just more expensively and with less success.

~Danielle Crittenden

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The Women's Quarterly

Summer 1995 ◆ No. 4

Danielle Crittenden
Editor

◆

Grace Paine Terzian
Publisher

Mitzi Hamilton
Art Director

◆

2111 Wilson Boulevard
Suite 550
Arlington, Virginia
22201-3057
Tel. 703/243-8989
Toll Free Line: 800/224-6000
Fax: 703/243-9230

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In *This* Issue

Do the Wrong Thing: ***Camille Harper*** describes how government money to aid the poor instead helps gangs control the poor 1

Diary: ***Danielle Crittenden*** on saving people from themselves 2

Correspondence 4

Boys Should Be Boys: ***Anne Roche Muggeridge*** defends the little savages 5

The TWQ Interview: ***Grace Paine Terzian*** talks with ***Honey Alexander*** 8

The Token Man: ***Ernest Hillen*** recalls the female inmates who kept him alive in a Japanese prison camp 14

"I Just Read Them for the Fashion": ***Cynthia Grenier*** asks, Have women's glossies become the genteel woman's pornography? 15

Dispatch: ***Wendy Shalit*** roasts the food cranks of Williams College 17

Dinner Will *Not* Be Ready at Six: ***Karen Fejer*** wonders why the family meal cooked by Mom has become a politically suspect act 19

One Last Observation: ***Anita Blair*** ponders courage and femininity astride a 550cc, 4-cylinder Honda 23

Cartoon by Charles Jaffé

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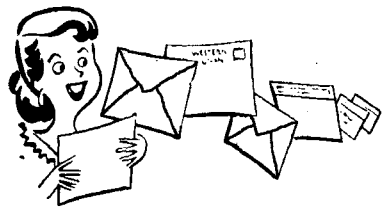
Correspondence

Think we're a tonic or an emetic? Either way, write! Send your letters to the Editor, The Women's Quarterly, *2111 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 550, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3057, or fax them to 703/243-9230.*

I'm so thankful for the existence of the Independent Women's Forum and so pleased with my recently received copy of *The Women's Quarterly* that I can't help wanting to add something to the dialogue.

Re "Two Views of Women in the Military" (Spring 1995): There is no question that women have valor. No question that they are as intelligent, capable, and brave as men. And yet I know of no society which has treated men and women as interchangeable and equivalent units. They are equal in all the things that matter most, but they are not the same physically or hormonally. Few women possess the energy levels, endurance and musculature of men. This is why men and women do not compete on today's athletic fields but compete, instead, with one another.

Is it possible that what may be good for military women may be disastrous for the military? Nobody in the services dares to ask out loud. And yet, long before a real



battle tests the proposition, we must know whether the integration of women into combat units will (as advocates insist) significantly improve the fighting skills of such a unit or whether it won't. The nation's safety may depend on knowing.

OLIVIA VLAHOS
Westport, Connecticut

At last a few good ideas ... but for goodness sake, lose those vacuous cartoons on your IWF [subscription] envelope and within, please. Thank you.

H. JOE SOPHER
Burlington, Vermont

Finally women are starting to answer the female impersonators and stand up for the beleaguered male.

SADIE FIELDS
Dunwoody, Georgia

I am 43. I have a Master's Degree in Communicative Disorders. I am happily married and a stay-at-home mom. I also teach four hours a week at my children's Home School Cooperative. Please sign me up for your magazine. At last something other than fluff and stuff.

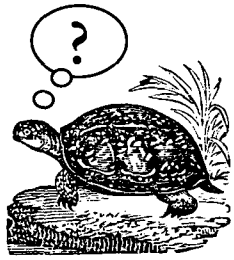
PAM FORRESTER
Fallbrook, California

I'm thinking of sending *The Women's Quarterly* as a gift for each of my two daughters, sometime products of the zeitgeist. This may be just what the doctor ordered — sort of an emetic!

(MR.) LESLIE KINGON
New York, New York

SHOULD THE TURTLE HAVE BEEN PURSUING A CAREER INSTEAD?

In her commencement speech to Smith College in May, Gloria Steinem recalled an experience as a student that millions of women might wish had been more formative for her: "On a [geology] field trip, while everyone else was off looking at the cutoff meander curves of the Connecticut River, I was paying no attention whatsoever. Instead I had found a giant, GIANT turtle that had climbed out of the river, crawled up a dirt road and was in the mud on the embankment of another road, seemingly about to crawl up on it and get squashed by another car. So, being (as my friends now tell me) a good co-dependent with the world, I tugged and pushed and pulled until I managed to carry this huge, heavy, angry snapping turtle off the embankment and down the road. I was just putting it back into the river when my geology professor arrived and said, 'You know, that turtle probably spent a month crawling up that dirt road to lay its eggs in the mud by the side of the road – and you've just put it back into the river.'"



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Boys Should Be Boys

Anne Roche Muggeridge defends the little savages

I grew up with the conviction that little boys were a mysterious life form. One day, a passing priest came to our door and whispered to my mother: "Mrs. Roche, did you know that your little boy is sitting on the roof?" My brother was not yet three. The same brother, when he was five, having been severely reprimanded by my crusty old grandfather, built a wood fire under the sofa on which my grandfather was taking his Sunday afternoon nap. Almost everything young males did and do continues to astonish me.

It's not surprising that women who have no brothers often find their sons strange and wild. Some friends brought their first child, a little boy of four, to visit us. His mother was an only child. During the visit, the little boy climbed on the sofa and carefully lifted down the row of pictures hanging above it. This seemed routine to us, but his mother was mortified. "He is on Ritalin," she said apologetically. "It really should be working by now." Apparently, quite a number of brotherless young women bring their energetic little sons to doctors for "treatment" — generally some form of sedation — of a condition described as "hyperactivity."

When my youngest and most alarming son (I have four) was two, I took him to our doctor for treatment of croup. He was one of those kids who are never out of motion while awake. During the examination, he kept reaching out to the interesting medical paraphernalia around him, and I kept gently fending off his little fingers.

"Is he always like this?" the doctor asked.

"Yes," I said. "He's always like this."

"Perhaps we should put him on Ritalin," said Doc.

"Over our dead bodies," said Mom. "He's not disturbed. He's disturbing."

"Well," he said, "I have five sons, and they weren't any trouble."

Certainly not to him. He was a superb family doctor, but he was nearly always away from home. I doubt if he often saw his children awake. His saintly wife brought them up.

This same doctor used to jokingly insist that boys were superior to girls. Girls, in his opinion, were more difficult, jealous, fragile, and unreasonable. Yet here he was, casually advocating chemical warfare against my merry son. This happened in 1971, shortly after I had first heard of such treatment. Our elderly, small-town family doctor was simply reflecting the change in the way that many psychologists and sociologists now approach the question of sex differences. Whatever his opinion of each, he had once considered the two sexes to be different from birth — profoundly different, their behavior proving them to be so. Once he would have said to me, "Well, that's what you've got to expect from boys. That's how they're made." Now he considered the ordinary behavior of young males to be aberrant, in need of forcible reform.

It's not a good time to be male. Prevailing sociology now thoroughly regards young men as social invalids and blames their parents. The fashion in education for the past three decades has been to try make boys more like girls: to forbid them their toy guns and rough play, to engage them in exercises of cooperation and sharing, to involve them in dolls and courses in the domestic arts, to denounce any boyish roughness as "aggressive" and "sexist." And boys rebel at their peril.

Yet the educational methods now forced on boys exhibit a fundamental misunderstanding of male nature. Modern educators believe that the sexually based distinctions made in the past were arbitrary inflictions by a theologically based culture whose claims have been exploded by modern research. The latest, very cautious (and politically fraught) studies reveal what

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instinct tells us — that boys show distinct behavioral differences from girls early in infancy, well before they could be socialized otherwise. Yet the governing organs of society still persist in thinking that boys, if caught early enough, can be feminized.

A kind of madness has taken over. My own four boys went through the school system at the zenith of experimentation in the 1970s and early 1980s. The old Home Economics class, designed for girls, was turned into Unified Arts. Boys were supposed to learn to cook and sew, girls to fix cars and weld. My preteen son refused to make a cake or sew a piece of clothing. Under pressure, he asked me, "Mom, could you help me crochet a hockey net?"

Of course, it's good in a pinch to know how to sew on a button, or make a meal, or change a baby or a tire. Boys are quite willing to baby-sit their sisters or wash a few dishes. But that isn't what the reformers have in mind — and the boys know it.

My young sons and their male friends resisted cross-gender pressures from outside the family as a setup, a violation of their masculine identity and their freedom of choice. The boys invariably behaved so wildly after Unified Arts that the principal had to meet them and simmer them down before they were fit to be returned to class. The university my sons attended imposed the same type of sexual blackmail. My Unified Arts graduate played on a university house-league hockey team that was forced to enlist at least one woman player or lose funding. She wasn't very good, but that didn't matter. She spent her time off ice alone in her dressing room. The men stopped enjoying the games and drifted away.

Why are boys the way they are? Because human beings are born male or female, different from and complementary to each other, thus completing human nature. They have different functions in the begetting and bringing up of children. Boys are not — *should* not — be like girls.

Boys are savages, as anyone who has taken care of them from birth and through several generations knows. Young males exist in a state of nature — free, wild, untamed, undomesticated. Girls prefer to get to know the world in a relationship with loving adults. Boys learn about the world in a different way, on their own, by trial and error. Boys hate to be directed (so, by the way, do their fathers), and they fade noiselessly away to engage in hair-raising experiments. What seems naughty or crazy to their mother is for them a matter of scientific exploration.

Last Christmas, my four-year-old grandson put his mouth around a lighted colored bulb on the outdoor Christmas tree to see what it would taste like — hot and red, presumably. Not he but his mother suffered shock. Once my older sons put their two-year-old brother in the dryer to see if it would spin with him in it (it did). I used to think that their heart-stopping behavior was somehow my fault until I met other mothers of sons. One evening we were at a neighbor's party and the lights went out with a bang. Their two-year-old son had stuck one of his mother's large V-shaped hairpins into a two-pronged electrical outlet. All the women screamed. We thought the little perisher had killed himself. The hairpin burnt its shape into his hand, but that was all. He didn't even cry much. "I guess he was grounded," his father joked. All the men laughed. It is on such occasions that a woman realizes how profoundly different her beloved males are from her.

Every society's biggest problem is how to deal with its young males. It's not a new dilemma. The Shepherd in *The Winter's Tale* says it all: "I would there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting — Hark you now! Would any but these boiled-brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather? They have scared away two of my best sheep, which I fear the wolf will find sooner than the master."

Young manhood is about proving to yourself that you're brave, braver than others, worthy to lead. Boys aren't born with "bad" traits but with fine, necessary ones, needing the government of loving and understanding upbringing. ("You're not going to rear that one," an old lady said grimly to my mother about my most alarming brother. She did though.) Unless they are socialized for the most part by their fathers or other strong male role models, boys will become useless and destructive to society: witness the inner cities. The father's role is pivotal in the development of his sons' understanding of the nature and purpose of masculinity.

Boys need to be educated differently from girls too. What used to happen where I grew up, in Newfoundland,was that boys were separated from girls after childhood because society believed the inborn differences between the sexes required that they be socialized differently. I was attending late high school at the time our

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local schools were integrated. The social and academic performance of boys suffered. The girls always cornered the top grades, not necessarily because we were smarter — though we thought we were — but because we were so much more willing to take direction. We liked to be taught, and we wished to avoid punishment. The boys' attention span, such as it was, fell off considerably. They showed off for us, tormented us, and neglected their school work. The teachers, all of them female, applied pressure — strapping and detaining them — to make them behave more like girls. It didn't work. About a third of the boys dropped out.

I wish that my sons could have had a masculine education resembling that of their father. He went to a boys' school where he was taught by men. At that time even the games boys played differed from those played by girls: basketball and lacrosse for the girls; rugger for the boys; tennis and field hockey neutral. My husband played rugger — English-style rugby football. He described the scrum to me: no place for a woman there. Eight men, ranged in three rows, one behind the other, each man clasping his neighbor by the waist, scrummed down, locked necks with the opposition and pushed, using their deliberately unshaven adolescent beards to abrade the faces of their opponents. My husband played "hooker" — front row middle. Held up by his two "props," he hooked the ball back with his feet to his mates. If your team lost, you were not allowed to sing the school's rowdy rugger songs on the bus back. Like many of his classmates, my husband went straight from school to the army for compulsory military service, and sang the same school songs after returning home victoriously from patrols against the Mau Mau.

One thing can be said for this sort of education: It teaches boys how to be men. Look around today and count the number of confused and unsocialized men everywhere. They don't know how to be fathers. They're scorned if they become soldiers. The young savages in our tribe have to be civilized, not feminized, and the civilizing must be done by men.

Our sons have poorer prospects than did their fathers. "Affirmative action" narrows their legitimate scope. Welfare laws work towards female-headed families, creating a large subculture of desperate, unattached males, and a staggering rate of out-of-wedlock births. Rapid, unstigmatized divorce removes the father from his sons' lives. The army — the last male bastion — has fallen to women. A modern soldier is as likely to be destroyed by a sexual assault charge as by a bullet. A man who sells his sperm for *in vitro* fertilization will never know his child. What kind of masculinity will the son of that father inherit? This generation of males is being remaindered. What should the mothers of sons do?

Don't treat your boys with tranquilizers. Like those old-fashioned headmasters, simply wear them out. My husband made a rink every winter in our garden, and all the neighborhood boys played there night and day. They used to come in to use the bathroom, in their skates. They broke every window on that side of the house, but it was worth it. I felt most alive and on my toes in those years when I was trying to keep my savages from destroying themselves. Three visits to the hospital emergency room during one Christmas holiday, where the head nurse said on the last visit, "*Three* Muggeridges? Perhaps we should look into this!" Twice to the police station. Any number of times to the school. In the second week of September, one of my sons' French teachers telephoned to complain about him. "Isn't it too early for that?" I asked in surprise, with a glance at the calendar.

Our boys have left home now, and our daughter is home only for holidays. We have been promising ourselves for years that when the children left we'd transform the old dump. As I contemplate the extent of the damage, I recall a statement from a study I'd read on child development: "Boys are observed to engage more often in 'unstructured' activities than girls." *Tiens!* That's a shocker. Mine unstructured our house. They broke every window that could be reached by a hockey puck or baseball. Three of them, roughhousing, broke the pipe that connects the toilet tank to the bowl and the resulting flood brought down part of the living room ceiling. They played floor hockey using their baby sister as goal. They broke the bottom landing while competing in how many steps they could clear in jumping over her. I miss them. They grew up to be kind, gallant, honest, funny, devout, stoic, brave and generous. I love them.

The house is battered and silent. "It does need refreshing," a friend said tactfully. But it was refreshing; their high spirits and unpredictability made it so. No decorator can make it as fresh and sweet as it once was. I think I'll leave it as it is. ◆

Anne Roche Muggeridge is author of The Desolate City *(Harper & Row: 1990).*

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The Lion Queen

Honey Alexander, wife of Lamar, isn't as sweet and yielding as her name would suggest, yet she may be the one to revive the demure role of traditional first lady. **_Grace Paine Terzian_** enters the circle of Mrs. Alexander's life for the second of our series of exclusive interviews with the wives of presidential candidates.

"My mother is the lioness who keeps the family in hand, and allows us to live and grow," wrote Honey Alexander's daughter Leslee in a school essay. A lioness named "Honey" might seem contradictory, but among Texans nicknames are handed out before defining traits have the chance to emerge. In Mrs. Alexander's case, she was dubbed "Honey" by her elder brother when she was just three days old, and she never outgrew it. Her real names, Leslee Kathryn, went no further than her birth certificate.

Mrs. Alexander says her childhood, on an estate just outside Victoria, Texas, was a happy one. She was born in 1945, the second of five children to Bette-jo and Frank Buhler. The Buhlers were prosperous and active in the state's Republican party. Politics — like her nickname and Southern accent — seem to have stuck. She headed north to study history at Smith College, and after graduating in 1967, went to Washington to work for Texas Senator John Tower. There, shortly afterward, she met Lamar Alexander at a Capitol Hill staff softball game. He recalls her "sliding into first base.... The slide, plus her bright red shorts, sent me reeling." At the age of 33, she became first lady of Tennessee. Pregnant with her fourth child, she wore a maternity evening gown to the inaugural ball.

Honey Alexander

Mrs. Alexander has remained in the background of her husband's career, tending family and pursuing the worthy causes of a governor's wife: She chaired Tennessee's Healthy Children Initiative and the Governor's Task Force on Mental Retardation Prevention. In 1979 she acted as honorary chairman of the International Year of the Child. Since 1988 she has served on the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Alexanders have been married for 26 years; their four children range in age from 16 to 25. If Lamar Alexander were elected president, his wife would no doubt play Donna Reed to Hillary Clinton's Maude. But as usual, appearances — like nicknames — would be misleading.

TWQ publisher and native Tennessean Grace Paine Terzian interviewed Mrs. Alexander in her husband's campaign headquarters, located in a jumbled office in a nondescript modern building in Nashville. The hour-long discussion concluded promptly — to the minute, actually — so that Mrs. Alexander could leave to pick up her teenage son from school.

Drawing by Dick Wright

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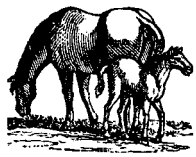
"I grew up riding horses. It was certainly far from what you would think of as Main Street, U.S.A."

TWQ. You grew up in a small town.

H.A. Pretty small town. It was more diverse than some in Texas because we did have industrial plants that were not far away, chemical plants primarily, so we had a lot of people coming and going in Victoria.

TWQ. What did your parents do?

H.A. My father was a businessman. He had real estate investments. He had a savings and loan company, which is still going. It did not get in trouble in the '80s as so many of them did. I mean, it kept its primary mission, so that is why it's still successful.



TWQ. Do you and your husband share a small town outlook?

H.A. Well, I grew up outside of the town and we raised sheep and chickens. We had several small ranches so I grew up riding horses. It was much more of an outdoor existence. I didn't live on shady streets with sidewalks, so it was certainly far from what you would think of as Main Street, U.S.A.

TWQ. What kind of a little girl were you? Rough and tumble, bookish?

H.A. Very rambunctious. Willing to try just about anything. I remember one of my father's favorite stories was when I kicked him in the shin. He also remembers when I climbed up on the roof. He gave me a BB-gun for Christmas one year, and I did do some shooting with him when I was younger, but I haven't done a lot of that recently. I've always been an early riser and I used to spend weekend mornings oftentimes with my father rounding up cattle, because it got me out of the house at about 5 a.m. and everyone else could sleep. [Laughs]

TWQ. And you obviously have a strong sense of public service. Where did that come from?

H.A. Well, both of my parents were very involved in the community, as most people who live in a small community are. When we did move to Texas, my mother was appalled by the political campaign which was Lyndon Johnson's race for the Senate [in 1948]. She was a strong Republican before that, but she was a stronger Republican when that was over, and she ended up being active in Republican politics throughout the 1950s. I used to go with her to political conventions and ladies' meetings. I worked in campaign offices as a young child. I would do filing and addresses and I would answer the phone — you know, whatever needed to be done.

TWQ. You graduated from Smith College in 1967. Were you involved in politics in your college years?

H.A. Well, I actually helped to found a Republican Club at Smith. It was at a time when the Vietnam War demonstrations were building. It really was a little bit ahead of the more radical activities. People felt that it was their civic responsibility to participate. It wasn't violent yet. I was active in a group who brought speakers to the campus. We had all kinds of different people — I was involved with the Black Panthers coming. It was very interesting, but it was all ideas — to find out how other people think and then we would make a decision about how we thought. They were exciting times.

TWQ. Do you think that political correctness has cracked down on some of the wide range of thoughts?

H.A. I do think so. I'm appalled sometimes at the ideas that I hear bandied about — that you can't think this way or that way. I had a young friend who was a student at Brown, which is where one of our children attends school. He put up a cartoon — I think it was a "Far Side" cartoon — on his door and someone found that offensive.

TWQ. And what did you aspire to when you graduated from college?

H.A. I think I wanted to be a responsible citizen of the United States. I had two job offers: one was to go to Europe and work for ITT and one was to go to Washington and work for Senator Tower. I went to Washington. I just felt like that was more my calling.

TWQ. What did you do for Senator Tower?

H.A. Oh, I answered the telephone. [Laughs] Important things. You know, back in the olden days people used to start at the bottom, so I started out as a receptionist and I greeted people at the door. I very quickly learned that I needed to study those little books that they hand out that have the pictures of the senators and the congressmen in them.

TWQ. When did your husband come into the picture?

H.A. I was having fun in Washington as a young woman, and I met him about a month after I started work there.We dated for about a year and a half. We were both very active in the '68 campaign. I was doing my part for

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Senator Tower and he was working for [Senator Howard] Baker and [as a volunteer for candidate] Richard Nixon. When that was over we decided to get married.

TWQ. And what wowed you about him initially?

H.A. He was thoughtful, he was creative. He was certainly a dedicated public servant — I mean, he was into ideas. He was Baker's legislative assistant so there were lots of issues that we would talk about. It was a very natural attraction.

TWQ. Can you tell me what you find admirable about your husband to this day?

H.A. I do know that he's the same person that he was. I mean, we all change and we grow. But I don't know too many politicians who are as grounded as he is. The first trip I made with him to Tennessee, we went to his home in Maryville. I met his relatives and stayed with his family. We hiked in the Smoky Mountains. That first trip, it was beautiful and wonderful.

"For me, motherhood was the right choice. Because of what Lamar was doing, I never felt the world was beyond my grasp."

TWQ. Did you look forward to motherhood?

H.A. Well, I had grown up in a big family and a very happy family and I knew that I wanted a big family. When I had my first child, there was really no question about continuing to work. I knew that I wanted to be with that child and be a full-time mom.

TWQ. You've chosen what we now call a traditional life — your family first and your personal ambitions second.

H.A. Or third or fourth or fifth.

TWQ. I'm just curious if you have any other thoughts on that choice.

H.A. For me, it was the right choice. I think we've been through an era where a lot of women question that choice. It was not an admirable decision for many people and some of my friends who were full-time homemakers were sort of embarrassed. I never was; but I also had so many other opportunities. Because of what Lamar was doing, I never felt the world was beyond my grasp.

TWQ. And what advice have you given your daughters about careers?

H.A. I think they will have to make up their own minds. I worked when I got out of college. Our daughter who graduated is working. Our next daughter — I'm sure that she will probably work or continue her studies.

TWQ. Do you think that the message that young women are receiving today about motherhood is negative or positive?

H.A. I think probably the young women of today are more realistic, both about their career options and about motherhood. I think they know a lot more than we did when we were that age.

TWQ. You became first lady of Tennessee when you were just 33, so you have really raised your children in the glare of public life. I'm curious how you preserved the privacy of your family.

H.A. Well, we made sure we understood that the family was the most important thing that we were dealing with. My children were my first priority. I tried to keep my activities as much as possible confined to weekdays because Saturday was the day that [the children] would play sports and I wanted to be there to watch them; Sunday was a family day and we tried to preserve that with very few exceptions. In that respect, it was fairly normal. We had no help on the weekends in the governor's residence. When we had friends and family over they would bring dishes, and then it was just like anybody else entertaining. I cooked every weekend, and frequently took the children to the cabin in East Tennessee or to the beach. Unlike some politicians, we never really demanded that our children be involved. If there were events that we thought that would be of interest to them, we asked them if they wanted to go. As children of the governor, they were exposed to lots of people: Muhammad Ali came to the residence; Elizabeth Taylor; and Alex Haley became a dear, dear friend because of Lamar's position. The list is endless, and I hate to start naming names but [the children] have had a chance to talk to these people and I think that really did help broaden their horizons.

TWQ. What important lesson do you think you have passed on to your children?

H.A. Well, like everyone we tried to teach them to be responsible citizens and true to themselves and honest. We went to Australia in 1987 for six months right after Lamar finished his second term as governor. We just felt like it was important to take some family time, far away from politics. We got to know one another in new ways and we had many shared experiences. We also screamed and yelled. I

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laughed when people said, "Why did you go to Australia?" And I said, "Well it's far enough away so that we could scream and nobody we knew would hear us." [Laughs]

TWQ. Another adventure I'd like to ask you about was when you were 40, I believe. You went into the North Carolina wilderness for nine days with 12 other women on an Outward Bound program —

H.A. It was my [40th] birthday present to myself. Lamar was going out of office in another year. I'd been so challenged and motivated, and I wanted to make sure that I was still able to rise to challenges, I guess. We did cross country trekking and other kinds of adventures — canoeing and rock climbing. It was a grand experience, it really was. I'm not a great camper but we camped out in the rain every night.

TWQ. And does the governor draw on your strength?

H.A. I think so. Sometimes he would like a little less chaos, actually. He's the sort of person who, when he was governor, the children would come into his office and turn on the TV and lounge around, and he would work. And I think he knew they were there, but they never really disturbed him — it was comforting to him. When they're around me I feel like they need all my attention. You know, whether they're 21 or whether they're two. That's just a difference in our personalities.

"Lamar put on a blue suit, and he put on a tie, and he put on a white shirt, and, you know, he's never been one to love dressing up in office clothes."

TWQ. Was your husband's decision to run for president a joint decision?

H.A. Lamar's the one who feels that he has something to give to the country and I'm happy to support him in that. I mean, it's not my ambition to be first lady or anything. But if my husband is running for office and that happens to be what goes with it, then I'm willing to accept that challenge.

TWQ. What advice do you give him?

H.A. If I see something that I think is good or if I see a problem I'm not reluctant to tell him. He does try things out on me. We've always worked in tandem.

TWQ. In the 1978 campaign for governor, your husband walked across the state. It was a dramatic thing to do.

H.A. Well, he had run for governor in 1974 and had lost. Really, I thought that was the end of politics because it was very devastating to lose. The governor who was elected instead [Ray Blanton] was not one who inspired the people of Tennessee. As a matter of fact, the people were embarrassed by many of the things that he did and the decisions that he made. He ended up spending some time in prison for some of those deeds.

When Lamar started talking about running again [in the next election for governor in 1978], I said, "Wait a minute. First of all, I want to know why you want to be governor. You're going to have to convince me first." I said the same thing to him about the current race: "I have to be convinced that this is the very best thing for the country, for you, for us." I said, "The second thing is, you ran a lousy campaign [in 1974]. Could we change the campaign mode?" I mean, he put on a blue suit, and he put on a tie, and he put on a white shirt, and, you know, he's never been one to love dressing up in office clothes. He'd much rather put on a pair of slacks and an open neck shirt and lounge around in his office at home. So we started talking about how could this campaign be different — what does Lamar enjoy doing? He loves to hike. People laugh about his red and black shirt. Lamar and I picked out the red and black shirt at a local army surplus store and we made that decision together. Everybody has one of those shirts, everybody wears one of those shirts, and if you are going hiking you are very likely to see a plaid shirt. So this was just a logical thing.

He loved the walk [across the state]. He loved being in those small towns, he loved the distances between the communities, the beautiful snow or ice or beautiful spring green, the trees. He loved just chatting with people as he walked along, and staying in homes with people he had never met before, and having those neighbors come in with a dish he never got at home because I'm not a Southern cook. He lost weight because he was walking so much, but he got to eat anything he wanted. It was a wonderful experience for him, and it was just a terrific campaign. I think his trip across the United States last summer was similar in the sense that he stayed with families, and he was able to take in what was on people's minds.

TWQ. There are some interesting parallels between the Clintons and the Alexanders as couples. You were both enthusiastic young governors and first ladies of Southern

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states, at about the same time. You both worked hard to improve your states' health and educational standards. Tell me about the differences.

H.A. Well, I think our approach is different in that I think we look for solutions on a personal, neighborhood, community level first. We don't look to government first. I think that the Clintons — and I don't want to put words in their mouths — I think their solutions are government-oriented. We've [also] spent as much time in public service as we have out, and I think when you have an opportunity to be involved in the community as a private individual you learn a lot of different kinds of things. You learn more about the strengths of that community than you ever would just as a public official standing back and making removed decisions.

"It just didn't make any sense to me. If you have a household and you get X amount of money, then you don't spend very much more than that unless you can see a way to pay it back soon."

TWQ. Let's go into a little more about your philosophy on the role of government in our lives. For example, you are on the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Now is that an appropriate role for government — to have a stake in broadcasting?

H.A. I got involved because of children's programming and children's programming wasn't happening anyplace else. The talk today is that children's programming is less important because you can get it on cable, you can get quality programs on the Discovery and Disney channels. But the people who need the quality programs the most perhaps are not the ones who can afford to pay for it. And cable doesn't go everywhere yet. I'm appalled, quite frankly, by some of the things that I see on TV. I can't believe the values that some of these programs are promoting to children. That doesn't mean that I want a government censor saying you can't have that, but I do think that children and their parents need options. If we can't create a viable commercial way to get all this to children who need it, for no money, or virtually no money, I think the government needs to step in and make sure that the option is available.

TWQ. Are there any roles that the government plays too much a part of that you would like to see reduced?

H.A. Well, I was reading the other day that I think the federal budget was not balanced for the first time — and you can correct me on this — in 1969. I can remember being scared about the prospect of an increasing federal deficit as far back as then. It just didn't make any sense to me. If you have a household and you get X amount of money, then you don't spend very much more than that unless you can see a way to pay it back soon. The government didn't do that. I mean, we just started spending and spending and spending, and everybody thought the government could do everything, and it's going to solve all the problems. I think people have come to realize that the government can't do it all. I think we've gone past those Great Society ideals, and we see the reality of the enormous federal deficit that has to be gotten under control. We've got to have balanced budgets. We can't let this go on.

TWQ. You were a proponent of family life planning in the Tennessee schools, which I presume means sex education, and you even did volunteer work for Planned Parenthood in the '70s. What was your interest in that?

H.A. Well, number one, when I was doing volunteer work for Planned Parenthood, it was before *Roe vs. Wade.* Planned Parenthood was giving educational materials to women who wanted to know more about birth control. What I did was go into General Hospital here in Nashville and talk to young mothers and say, "You just had a baby — Do you want to delay your next pregnancy? If so, there are things that you can do." I think it's important for a child to be wanted and of course for a child to be loved, and I saw an awful lot of very, very young mothers. One mother was 19 and she had just delivered her fourth child. I was pregnant at the time with our second child and I thought, gosh, I couldn't handle that, I don't know how she does it.

TWQ. And today — are there new ideas on the prevention of teen pregnancy that impress you? We talk about things differently now.

H.A. Well, I just read that it looks like New Jersey will be able to say that they won't offer [welfare] benefits for a second child. I think that's legitimate. I think if people are paid for children as they come along, that does encourage children in the welfare system. It's also pretty ridiculous to

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have a welfare system that tosses men out of the house. I mean, I know that AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] had a purpose when it was created many years ago. But I certainly saw instances in which a father was not living in a family because the mother couldn't get medical attention if he was there. Teenage pregnancy will only be prevented when teenagers decide not to have sex and not to engage in those kinds of risky behaviors that result in pregnancy. They have to accept some personal responsibility for the actions that they take. I think our society has gone through a period where it was okay not to be married and to have children, and I don't agree with that. I think [this message] has to come from the family, it has to come from the churches, it has to come from the community saying, "We don't accept this, this is not our value. If you want to, go live someplace else. You have that freedom in this country." That's what's great about this country. People move all the time and they do all those things, and I'm sure they can find a community that will support their values. But I think most people value families.

"I'm against abortion — I don't really know anyone who is for abortion. We'd like to have a better world where that wasn't even an issue at all."

TWQ. Tennessee's economy prospered — boomed — during your husband's tenure as governor. You and your husband made quite a lot of money, too. How do you answer those who criticize the propriety of your conduct?

H.A. Our financial philosophy has been to invest in good ideas and good people and we've been fortunate to get return on that frequently. Not always. Some investments haven't turned out as well. We've made money, and we feel comfortable about our decisions. When there was even an appearance of a conflict of interest we tried to make sure that it wasn't a conflict of interest, that it wasn't even an appearance of a conflict of interest. America is a society in which people are encouraged to succeed, and I think we've tried to succeed in many different ways. If we've been successful financially, I think that's part of the American dream. Our records are as open as any family's records have ever been, I think, and we're happy to share that information. People can make their own judgments.

TWQ. Many first ladies and potential first ladies are pushed to declare their point of view on women's issues. Will you answer questions about abortion, welfare reform, sex education …?

H.A. I don't mind telling my opinions about things, but I'm very fast in saying too that I'm not the candidate. I have my opinion as any citizen of the United States has an opinion. I'm against abortion — I don't really know anyone who is for abortion. We'd like to have a better world where that wasn't even an issue at all.

TWQ. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Does that word mean anything to you?

H.A. I believe that women should have equal opportunities in the workplace and that they should have equal opportunities in education. But I would not call myself a feminist. I think that word has gotten some connotations that I'm not as comfortable with.

TWQ. Your husband has this folksy image. The Clintons have been a casual couple too and have been criticized for it. Will you advise your husband to act presidential when it's time?

H.A. If Lamar is going to a black-tie dinner, he'll wear his black tie. If he's going to a business meeting, he'll wear a business suit, and if he's going hiking or walking he'll probably dress casually. He's not a fashion-conscious guy, but I think he'll dress appropriate to the occasion.

TWQ. I just have one quick last question. It seems as though you're at peace with yourself in the choices you've made, and looking over all you've said you seem to have led a charmed life — so many things have gone well, and you've had great success. Are there any dark hours that you've faced?

H.A. No. I'm not sure I would call it a charmed life, but I have four healthy, wonderful children, and a wonderful husband. I feel very charmed in that way. ◆

HELEN REDDY, CALL THE U. N.

David Boldt, columnist for the Philadelphia Inquirer, *writes, "The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing this September has hit an odd impasse on an unlikely question: What is a woman?" The problem has arisen, Boldt reports, because American and European delegations refuse to accept any definition that acknowledges biological differences between men and women. We wonder, does this mean the urinals in Beijing will be communal?*

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How Women Saved Me

***Ernest Hillen** recalls the female inmates who kept him "alive and decent" in a Japanese prison camp*

I was delighted to see my book *The Way of a Boy: a Memoir of Java* reviewed in a London newspaper by J.G. Ballard, author of the bestselling *Empire of the Sun*. Ballard knew all about a boy's life in Japanese prison camps during World War II — my subject — and posed a question: "Hillen, interestingly, spent three years in a women's world where the only adult males were the hostile Japanese guards, and one is curious to know what the long-term effects were upon him."

Actually I spent fully three-and-a-half years in internment camps for women and children on Java, Indonesia. I was seven in early 1942 when we (my mother, my older brother, and I; my father had been removed to a men's camp a few weeks before) were trucked in, and 10 when the Japanese capitulated in August, 1945. Our camps were crammed with women and small children — in time, boys as young as 11 (like my brother) were considered a "danger to the state," and shut up separately. The military laid down their hard, often arbitrary, rules. They shrank food supplies and living space, but otherwise they were fairly indifferent to the running of the camps. That was left to the inmates: women.

The women organized themselves in teams and cooked, nursed, washed dangerously dirty hospital linen, cleaned latrines, swept streets, hauled furniture, repaired living quarters, dug vegetable gardens, and caught compulsory quotas of flies. In between, they lined up endlessly under the white sun for rations, water, or to go to the toilet. Adults and teenagers worked the livelong day. They grew brown, thin, weak, sluggish, and their rag-covered bodies were stained with diarrhea, bloated from hunger and beriberi, and showed boils as big as Ping-Pong balls. Children looked the same. We didn't have to work, there was no school, and we wandered about, scrounging for food at garbage dumps, playing slow games, stealing, resting in shadowy places staring at the ants at our feet. Everyone lived with hunger, pain, uncertainty, fading hope, and the terrible sameness of camp life.

But we lived with something more. I recall an older woman friend saying at the time, "The bad get worse here, the good better." It sums it up fine. I know now that that is certainly what happened to most of the women I knew then, and, further, that almost all of those women belonged in the second category — my mother being a splendid example. Dare I suggest that if this was so in my small circle, it was so in the entire camp, even in all the camps?

Rather than diminishing them, the ever-increasing misery appeared to fire the women over the months and years to squelch self-pity, pettiness, and bullying, and instead to nourish loyalty, patience, courage, courtesy, generosity, common sense and good (if black) humor. There were many astonishing acts of grace. "It's hard to stay alive," my mother said to me once, "but even harder to stay alive and decent."

Was it the same in the civilian men's camps, where deprivation was no worse? From what I've heard and read — sporadically, at best. True, the women had children to take care of — their own, or those of a sick or dead neighbor — which made it absolutely necessary to contrive a mood of some normality and safety. (Wherever we slept my mother always set up a small "vase" of greenery, twigs or weeds, stuck in whatever container she could find; she never let me forget the birthdays of my father, brother, and all our other relatives in the world beyond the camp.)

But it doesn't entirely explain the difference in morale.

I think that when it comes to enduring suffering, most women are simply stronger, tougher, and more ingenious than most men. Also, it's endurance of a sort that doesn't carry within it the spur of achievement, of competition. And I think women are also often better than men at teaching the calmness, courage, and common sense it takes to live through brutal times, especially to children. I suspect, though, that most women and most men already know this.

As to the long-term effects of being locked up with only women for so long? Well, I'm alive because of women. I have an abiding interest, liking, and respect for women. And if I absorbed and retained even a little of their worth, I must be a better man for it. ◆

Ernest Hillen's The Way of a Boy: A Memoir of Java *will be published in the United States in September by Penguin Books.*

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"I Just Read Them for the Fashion"

Cynthia Grenier asks: Have women's glossies become the genteel woman's pornography?

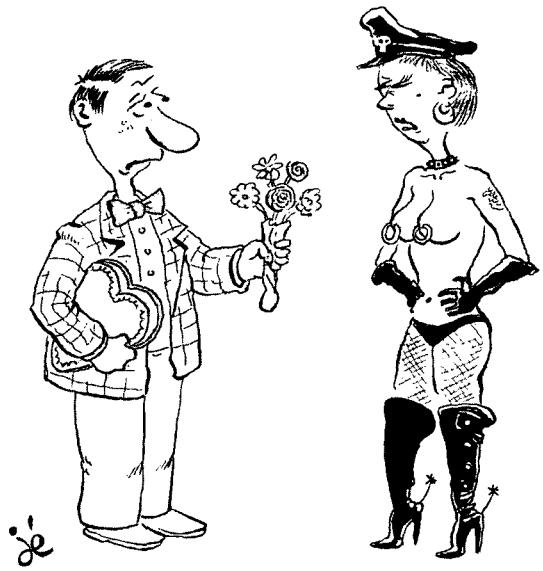
Unless you are a regular subscriber to women's magazines, you are probably a little startled when you pick one up at a supermarket checkout or salon. There, between the siren lips of the Revlon girl and the promissory cups of WonderBra, are headlines to match the steamiest letters to the editor of *Penthouse*.

Glamour's May issue emblazoned its cover with "Real Stories of the Night the Condom Broke." *Redbook* competed with, "Drive Him Wild in Bed: The Surprising Places He Wants You to Touch" (in a bow to sexual equality, the March issue had offered, "The Easy Orgasm: Learn How Tonight"). And *Marie Claire*'s June issue promised to explain, "Why My Husband and I Star in Amateur Porn."

The recent national sex survey that revealed the hum-drumness of Americans' sex lives clearly has not penetrated the offices of the editors at Condé Nast and Hearst. The January *Mademoiselle* announced "All About Orgasms," while *Glamour* guaranteed "Sexual Satisfaction." In February, *Glamour* gave three cover lines to sex: "Sexual Comebacks: How Couples Reignite"; "Sexy Clothes for Real Life"; and "Breaking Up: How to Feel Happy & Sexy Again." February's *Redbook* led with "Married Lust: 4 Ways to Feel Like First-Time Lovers," and followed with a leering double-entendre: "Michelle Pfeiffer's Baby Love: The Longing She Had To Satisfy (Even Before the Wedding)." (Actually the article turned out to be about Ms. Pfeiffer's adoption of a baby while she was still unmarried.)

Not all women's magazines have lost their heads; the degree of lust tends to reflect a magazine's demographics. High-fashion publications like *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* still seem to prefer clothes to sex. At family-oriented magazines, such as *Women's Day* and *Family Circle,* the recipes are for pasta, not better sex. The magazines for younger teenagers, such as *Seventeen* and *Sassy* — while more outspoken about sexual matters than a few decades back — still promote virginity and "talking with your mother" about sex. But the plump, glossy monthlies aimed at the young professional, the college student, the working woman — *Glamour, Mademoiselle, Elle, Marie Claire, New Woman,* and *Redbook* — are consumed with the subject. Surprisingly *Cosmopolitan* – edited by the septuagenarian Helen Gurley Brown – is now marginally more demure than its competitors.

Much of these magazines' sexual content literally could not be reprinted in a mainstream newspaper. To cite two of the very mildest examples, *Mademoiselle*'s monthly"Relationships" feature recently advised readers to "Follow your heart, not your clitoris." A



"Really! What kind of magazine do you think I am anyway?"

Cartoon by Charles Jaffé

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reader of *Glamour*'s "Sex and Health" section wrote in to reveal, "My boyfriend thinks it would be sexy for me to shave off all my pubic hair."

Nor are the morals implied by the articles any better than those suggested by *Playboy* photo-spreads – maybe even worse. In an article in *Marie Claire* on "Sex Etiquette: How to Behave In & Out of Bed" regarding "etiquette when you have more than one lover," the magazine advised, "Certainly sleeping with someone doesn't mean you've promised him exclusivity." In *Redbook,* once a bastion of young motherhood, Rebecca Waldron, Ph.D., opines "Penis-in-vagina intercourse paints people into a real corner. Learn to find satisfaction in mutual masturbation and sex toys." Strikingly, men are generally referred to as "partners," "companions," "mates," seldom as "husbands." Marriage, while not exactly downgraded, is more or less marginalized. All the magazines assume that their readers have already logged quite a bit of mattress time. The February *Mademoiselle* nicely summarized the moral ethos: "With sex, there's no right and wrong — only pleasure."

Unlike *Playboy* and *Penthouse,* however, *Glamour* and the others are neither shrink-wrapped nor kept out of reach of children in stores. On the other hand, the women's magazines do avoid street language. Genitalia are always referred to with the proper clinical terminology. Also, there is generally some helpful "how-to" angle to a story, perhaps to persuade a woman that what she is reading might actually be Emersonian self-improvement and not just smut.

What's going on? After all, weren't 12 years of Republicanism in the White House and the recent anointing of Newt Gingrich supposed to have made the culture more conservative? Hasn't Susan Faludi warned of a "backlash" that would transport women back into the 1950-beehive hairstyles and ranch homes once so lovingly depicted in the pages of these very same women's magazines?

The editors themselves are unhelpful in explaining. The February issue of *Redbook* marked the arrival of a new editor-in-chief, Kate White, who wrote excitedly in her "Editor's Notes": "I love the fact that in my first issue I get to showcase *Redbook*'s new sex survey." I contacted White, who elaborated on her editorial mission. According to her, the decision to "turn up the heat" happened about four years ago. "Actually," she said, "we've always had a sex article. Women are always saying, 'That's not the magazine my mother read,' but years ago our articles editor wrote on Masters and Johnson's first book."

White further insists that *Redbook*'s sexual content is presented within the context of marriage, "for the reader who often has begun to put sex on the back burner, whose time and energy is running down."

She added that, "Yes, we do get complaints from older readers, but then they are not our target audience." Indeed, since that editorial decision four years ago, the magazine has reached a circulation of 3.2 million. White replaced Ellen Levine, whom she credited with "making *Redbook* a superbly smart, sexy, contemporary, and fascinating magazine." It may be significant that Ellen Levine moved on to run another Hearst publication — *Good Housekeeping*, one of the very few major women's monthlies to retain the traditional content of family, food, and fashion. A former editor allowed that *Good Housekeeping* had lost a few ad pages in the last year, and may have become "a little stagnant."

Elizabeth Crow, who took over the editorship of *Mademoiselle* slightly more than a year ago, defended the coverage of sex in her magazine as social duty. "Sex is much more complicated today because of AIDS and STDs [sexually transmitted diseases]," she said. "We're living in an age of conflict. The far right may want to pray sex away, but we feel sex is a nice part of life and it's important to have a good time.

"Sexual etiquette," she contended, "is important and useful. It's important that a young woman today knows how to talk a guy into using a condom. Attitudes about sex among young women are changing. It used to be that the rule was you didn't sleep together until the third date. Now women are more cautious — the time span has grown to six dates."

Crow maintained that there are certain lines she will not cross: "the salacious, the merely titillating, or just a raunchy read." As for whether the results of the November election will make any difference in the magazine's coverage, she emphatically replied, "Yes, of course. We're planning features on the danger to the arts, on social services, on social change."

Maybe the answer to the question of "Why all the sex?" is quite an old one. If people are doing it less and afraid of it more, perhaps women — as their husbands have suspected since time immemorial — would rather read about it instead. ◆

Cynthia Grenier writes "The Mag Trade" column for the Washington Times.

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Dispatch

Eat Me

Wendy Shalit roasts the food cranks of Williams College

Williamstown, Massachusetts

George Orwell wrote that if we are to understand where socialism goes astray, we must first understand its "food cranks." As he put it in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, the "food crank is by definition a person willing to cut himself off from human society in hopes of adding five years on to the life of his carcass; that is, a person out of touch with common humanity."

I have long felt that if I could only understand my college's "food cranks"—a popular activist group which calls itself EAT ME—then, at last, I could perhaps truly make sense of the mysteries of campus politics. There is one slight problem, however. For the past two years, as a curious columnist on our alternative campus newspaper, I have been on panel discussions with EAT ME, engaged in college debates with EAT ME, have attended their meetings, their demonstrations—and yet, I confess that I still do not understand them.

EAT ME writes in their literature that they are devoted to conquering the problem of eating disorders — anorexia, bulimia, overeating — and to that end they seek to overthrow the institutions which cause eating disorders. According to them, these institutions include the "patriarchy" and its supposedly wholly-owned subsidiary, the advertising industry; the "capitalist

superstructure," which reaps a tidy profit from selling images of "unreasonably thin" women, and, above all, the "institutionalized male gaze" with its "objectifying tendencies."

The members of EAT ME all write in sentences that are either entirely capitalized or entirely lowercase. To make distinctions between letters, such as those beginning a sentence, by capitalizing and thus unjustifiably "prioritizing" them, is unacceptable. Also, breaking up one's train of thought with punctuation is not tolerated, so all sentences of EAT ME disciples run together. As one EAT ME member explained, "Supposedly 'correct' grammar, supposedly 'correct' punctuation, and supposedly 'correct' capitalization" are all ways of "trying to control women that lead directly to their subjugation." (Note that it's always leading *directly* with them.)

Presumably, like the perils of capitalizing words, retaining a leader might also be perceived as dangerously "hierarchical" (and thus patriarchal). Instead they have "coordinators." Everyone in the group is a "coordinator." The beauty of this is that no one can be held accountable for her actions.

When EAT ME still allowed me to attend their meetings (before they enacted a policy of being closed to all "who have demonstrated a desire to kiss up to the patriarchy"), I noticed they were invariably unhappy with the attendance. Why was it, they began each meeting bitterly pondering, that there were only 15 women and a sprinkling of sensitive men present, when they just knew, *knew* that everyone at Williams was suffering from an eating disorder? At the very least, they were certainly sure that all were struggling with "issues of body image," so why couldn't everyone just come out and admit it? Maybe they are afraid, one student suggested. The media's objectification of women has been so thorough in our society that even if you recognized you were having "problems with body image," you would still not be able to admit it to yourself.

Therefore it was decided that more activism would definitely be required to help the students understand that they were all suffering from eating disorders, and that their only hope would be to "collectively eschew traditional standards of beauty."

Drawing by Charles Jaffé

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This collective eschewing was to begin last December. EAT ME rented a glass display case located in the most prominent area of the campus, a display case typically used to post notices. For several days, members of EAT ME garbed themselves in tight black clothing, covered their mouths with duct tape, and spent the hours locked inside the display case, thereby signifying that women were indeed "silenced objects on display" in our society.

Alas, things did not go quite as planned (or did they?), for although most young men passed the display case in utter solemnity and guilt, a few male students engaged in what is known in EAT ME quarters as "making comments about the body."

In fact, most of what the men said that day actually struck me as rather complimentary—"Gee, she looks like Sleeping Beauty, let's wake her up" — but this did not stop EAT ME from spending my College Council-allocated tuition fees to send out an all-campus mailing denouncing such "rampant sexual harassment." Soon more posters crept up (of the How Could This Happen at Williams? variety), and more marches and demonstrations were organized. A ritual begun in homage to women dying of anorexia (150,000 per year, they claimed) proved to be a particularly rich source of all kinds of "evidence" of sexual harassment and female exploitation—in turn necessitating, of course, more funding for the organization.

When I pointed out, however, that the 150,000 figure was incorrect (according to the American Association of Anorexia and Bulimia) EAT ME didn't seem to care. Does the fact that the number of deaths is actually closer to a hundred change anything in your view? I asked.

Nope, not at all, the EAT ME coordinators said calmly. After hearing this, I finally decided that debating these women was pointless. I then determined to avoid them whenever possible.

To do so was no simple feat, for around this time EAT ME began to put on their "bean displays." The first bean display took place outside Baxter Dining Hall. About 13 girls, all attired in black, sat at one of the long tables. Each girl had one plate in front of her and was slowly pushing a single lima bean around her plate with a fork. Some of the women had their heads down on the table, but the ones with their heads upright had smeared their faces with charcoal, producing an ashen, gaunt effect. A male student near me gave voice to my inchoate sentiments: "What in the world are you *doing*?"

Of course you wouldn't understand, he was told. You are the problem.

Like any other group, EAT ME has its favorite professors, the ones who do "understand," and try to promote the "understanding" to others as well. This is where food cranks become book cranks. Ironically in this case, the favored one turns out to be male. This particular professor has a big placard outside his office door which dares, "IF YOU READ BOOKS, JUSTIFY IT!" OK, I read books, I said to myself, I can justify them. For a year I stopped by this professor's office on the way to class, but when I passed by he was never there, so I never had an opportunity to justify the books.

Finally one day toward the end of the year, at last the door was open. I peeked in and saw the professor hunched over his desk.

I knocked to get his attention and tried to say as politely as possible, "Well, here I am. I'm here to justify the books."

"Huh?" he said.

"The books, you know...your sign." I pointed to his door.

"Oh, right, right," he said, opening his door all the way and gesturing for me to come in. Then he said rather ominously, "You know—the book is dead."

Of course the book was dead, the text was dead—and that's why we're here at college, right? I took a deep breath. So this was the moment I had been waiting for, all of my ideological opponents rushing together and embodied in this single figure of postmodernity; here I was finally entering his office, actually bracing myself for the ultimate instant when (so I flattered myself) I would prove to him the ridiculousness of all these absurd gender theories, of EAT ME, perhaps even of Foucault as well. But all bets for serious discussion were off when I entered his office and began to laugh hysterically, for there I saw — can you guess? — an office practically teeming with books! Bookshelves and bookshelves full, books piled on his desk, books on the floor, books on chairs, books teetering precariously from above, books peering down at me from the highest shelves, books simply everywhere.

"But what are these doing here?" I protested.

"Oh," he explained a little guiltily, "That was from *before*." ◆

Wendy Shalit, a sophomore at Williams College, is senior editor and columnist for the Williams Free Press.

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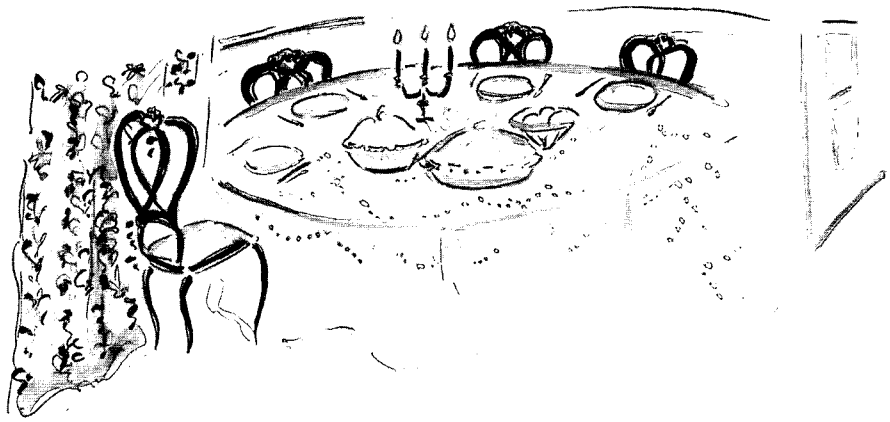

Dinner Will *Not* Be Ready at Six

Karen Fejer wonders why the family meal cooked by Mom has become a politically suspect act

"I have no fridge, stove or microwave in my condominium. Cooking is not something I consider doing. Why waste money on appliances?" asks Ida Ash, an accountant who's divorced and living alone. Don't you ever want a cold drink? I asked her. Ida says she doesn't mind drinking soda at room temperature. She eats breakfast at home, lunch at the office, and dinner out.

"I want to spend time with my kids, not chopping vegetables," says my neighbor, a television producer named Marjorie. I met her at the deli where she was buying her Friday night dinner: chicken soup with matzo balls, roast chicken, and potato latkes. Marjorie predicts that cooking will go the way of sewing — a hobby for a few individuals: "Why would you make macaroni and cheese from scratch unless you were some kind of fanatic?"

"The closest I come to cooking is opening a jar of apple sauce and sprinkling cinnamon on top," says Beatty Cohan, a Rhode Island psychotherapist. "Sometimes I eat three times a day in a restaurant. For me cooking is the biggest waste of time, the biggest bore. It literally gives me a headache." Married to her third husband, Beatty has never learned how to cook.

When I started asking women how they felt about cooking, a surprising number told me how much they hated it. They'd rather clean than cook. Their kids don't appreciate it. All that effort, and it disappears in minutes. You're just left with a mess to clean up.

Several women mentioned their mothers as the reason they didn't cook. One person told me her mother resented being a homemaker and burnt the food. Another said that her mother was a caterer and cooked too much. Someone else said her mother wouldn't let her help in the kitchen, so she never learned to cook. And a number of highly intelligent women told me they'd tried to learn how to cook, but just couldn't get the hang of it.

Although they spoke candidly, several women asked me not to use their names. They requested anonymity, I think, because cooking has ceased to be viewed as a simple act of preparing nourishment. Whether you cook or not has come to define your political stance. By declining the task of cooking, a woman asserts the importance of her working role over her domestic role. A "no cooking" stipulation in the recent prenuptial agreement of a female real estate agent I know (who only handles homes in excess of one million dollars) emphasizes that point.

And if cooking is out, then baking is a joke. The subject came up on a balmy night last summer when I was out sailing. My friend Patty, a lawyer, mentioned that in the past week she had thought about baking bran muffins. She burst out laughing as she told us how she had to stop herself from going ahead and making them. In other words, if you have bran muf-

Drawing by Agnes Aru

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fin fantasies, don't act on them. I didn't want to admit I often make bran muffins.

The current trend away from home cooking isn't a new phenomenon. But cooking (and other forms of housework) began to take on political overtones after the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. As Esther Greenglass, a feminist psychology professor at York University in Toronto, puts it, "I don't know of any data that suggest that women are genetically better suited to preparing meals than men. The reasons women have had to do it so many years is that they lacked the power to change it."

They have also lacked the power to coerce men into the task. After nearly three decades of feminist re-education, most men still don't go beyond tending the backyard barbecue. According to Irena Chalmers, author of *The Great Food Almanac,* 77% of women today "make" dinner without spousal help. That is, an average working mother spends just 15 minutes in the kitchen "preparing" dinner — heating up ready-made foods and putting together a salad.

The men who do cook have a very different approach than do women. That's the impression I got from Steven Katz, a sociology professor I know who is part of an academic circle of "foodies." As a believer in sexual equality, Katz shares the cooking with his wife, who is also a professor. He bakes bread, makes his own pasta, gives dinner parties and grows organic vegetables. He and his male friends like to show off and impress each other. "I wouldn't have them over unless the food was going to be really outstanding, unless I was really prepared to cook major things," he admits.

Boomers, according to a recent article in *Fortune* magazine, "can't or won't cook," and America's $800 billion food industry is scrambling to come up with ways of catering to the country's changing food habits. You don't even have to open a tin of tuna anymore. According to the owner of my neighborhood's specialty food store, tuna salad is one of his hottest sellers. When he opened his shop 12 years ago, he assumed his customers were looking for gourmet items. Not so. What they really wanted, he says, is home-cooked food — soups, chopped liver, breaded fish, and chicken dishes. "They want food like Mum used to make. Things they would have at their cousin's or aunt's," he says.

Even my own son is hooked. When I ask him what he wants for dinner he says, "Buy prepared food."

That hurts.

Yet with the passing of home cooking, so too goes the ritual of the family meal.

Typically, many families eat breakfast on the run. Parents lunch at the office, their children eat at daycare or school. As for dinner, well, kids grab a quick snack at home or a hamburger at the local fast-food outlet on the way to music lessons or hockey games. By the time Mom gets home at six, she's probably too tired to cook and besides, she's had a business lunch and just wants to eat something light. When he finally arrives at seven, Dad is left to forage through the refrigerator on his own. Eating around the dinner table as a family has evolved into eating separately in front of the TV.

When you think about it, this isn't a trivial loss. After all, what we're losing is the tradition of the family dinner — something we've been doing since the first cave dwellers sat around a fire roasting the day's hunt. As I remember it, growing up in the '50s and '60s, our dinner table was the site of a lot of family interaction — daily reports on events at school, my father's latest vexations at the office, how my mother had spent her day. As kids, we had the opportunity to hear about the adult realm, to listen to our parents' viewpoints, and to begin to shape ideas of our own.

I find it ironic that, as women across the continent are gaining positions of control, they are handing control of what they eat and feed their families to commercial food processors. Someone else is deciding how much fat, salt, additives, protein, vegetables, and fruit they will consume. It's convenient, but is it healthy? If all this prepared food is so good for you, why are there alarming reports that North Americans are becoming increasingly overweight? Is liberation from cooking worth this?

On a Friday night recently, I had my brother and sister-in-law and their four-year-old son over for dinner. My sister-in-law was helping me clear the dining room table. In the kitchen she noticed a plate of bran muffins on the counter, and asked, "Did you make these?" When I said yes, she blurted out, "You're such a *hausfrau.*" It felt like an accusation. "I have more time than you—" I began to say before I stopped myself. Then it occurred to me: I don't have to make excuses for baking bran muffins. ◆

Karen Fejer is a writer who lives in Toronto.

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Continued from page 1

a program intended to help law-abiding people move out of the projects into private housing). This program — like all the well-intentioned government programs that I've experienced and witnessed during my years as a resident in and near some of Chicago's worst housing — has turned into a messy, often deadly, arrangement between honest citizens and the gangs that inevitably control the federal funding and the streets.

I remember all too well what had happened to a young woman in the early '70s when she defied her "survival contract." That had been when I still taught English at a high school near Chicago's infamous Robert Taylor Homes. The young woman had been headed in all the right directions. She was an honor student; she had a scholarship waiting at a prestigious university; she wanted to be a real role model for other kids, showing them that academic excellence — just like basketball — could pave the way out of poverty and violence.

But her plans defied the gangs' control of the projects. The federal War on Poverty had a lot of intervention programs on the way and the gangs wanted to control these, too. If gang leaders allowed this young woman to succeed in setting the example that study, attendance and hard work paid off better than gang membership, others would follow her lead. So the word came down: Cease and desist, or else.

She too chose "or else," but hers was a different "or else" from mine. One afternoon, several gang members intercepted her on her way home from school. They dragged her into a vacant apartment, tortured and gang-raped her, shot her full of heroin, kicked down the door of her apartment, and drowned her naked in her bathtub.

The gang, known then as "Black P. Stone Nation," went on to become nationally famous, to own real estate, and to set up its own "intervention" projects — recreational programs and vocational training — funded in large part by the taxpayer. The Robert Taylor projects, in turn, became some of the most dangerous in the country.

After my own shooting incident, I managed to find another "Section 8" apartment in a building with thick walls and no windows directly overlooking the street. I felt safe for a time — until one day, *crack!* I rolled over and continued my afternoon nap. There was no point in calling the police. I had heard the shot, but I couldn't tell them where it came from.

Minutes later, the police were pounding on *my* door. An addict/drug dealer had accused me of shooting at him with a .22 caliber pistol in the gangway below. After which, he'd claimed, I had run up two flights of stairs — crutches, brace and heart problem — to hide in my apartment.

The complainant's apartment was adjacent to mine. I was familiar with the heavy traffic in and out. The man was enrolled in a nearby drug abuse program: A not-for-profit law firm had advertised in area newspapers that it could help addicts receive government benefits (through the Supplementary Security Income program). Gangs especially like to control drug abuse programs since addicts are their customers. Such programs are rarely monitored adequately. A report released in 1993 by Sen. Bill Cohen (R.-Maine) indicated that 250,000 substance abusers collected $1.4 billion in disability benefits. Fewer than one-third (78,000) were required to receive treatment or even to have representative payees to monitor the money's use. The same report points out that some of the representative payees were addicts, bartenders, and liquor store owners.

I had reported my neighbor many times to the police, determined that there would be no more "survival contracts" for me. As I sat in a chair with one officer watching me, the other searched my apartment for a gun. He didn't find one because I don't own one. I re-reported the activities of my neighbor, and the police left.

In all the current discussions about welfare reform, few people — few people, that is, outside the inner cities — realize that government aid to help the poor in reality more often reinforces gang control of the neighborhood.

For example, a friend called and asked if I would attend a meeting to evaluate a program run by a local organization that tries to teach "leadership development" to former gang members. There had been a recent gang-related shooting at the school where the meeting was being held. My friend's nine-year-old son had seen one of his friends fatally shot. The neighborhood hoped the program would help curb gang violence.

I went to the meeting. As it happened, I was familiar with the program and had its literature on file at home. Afterwards, my friend asked me to meet in private with some other friends. Private meetings are much safer than public ones. This group said that the gangs in the neighborhood, who had already approved the program, had put the word out to little kids (eight to 12-years-old) that they must "buy a gun and sell drugs to pay for it" or they "wouldn't be allowed to

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participate in the program." The program offered activities designed to intervene with gang involvement — such as sports events and field trips.

Part of the problem for outsiders in understanding the situation is that there is little accurate literature about gangs and gang-control of the inner cities. Frederick Thrasher's landmark book *The Gang*, which provided guidelines and set the standards for gang research until the 1990s, identified 1,500 street gangs in Chicago alone. But Thrasher's book was written in 1928, a half century before guns, drugs, and organized criminal activities became part of gang tradition. In those early years, street gangs really were small groups of poor kids trying to defend a few blocks of turf. But in Chicago today, the number of gangs ranges between 150-175; this smaller figure does not represent a reduction of gang activity, but rather city-wide consolidation and organization of the gangs. Much of that consolidation occurred during the War on Poverty. Because federal housing and program resources tend to be concentrated in the same areas, the result was to bring gangs together geographically.

The other aspect of poverty programs that worsened the situation for the poor was the change in their approach to raising "self-esteem" rather than encouraging the skills needed to compete beyond the ghettoes. Frankly, I find it hard to understand why otherwise rational people will buy the low self-esteem arguments of social workers when gangs deal drugs openly on street corners wearing $125 shoes and $300 jackets, dressed in gang uniform colors. This is not low self-esteem; it is arrogance.

Poverty programs aren't cheap to operate, either. There is insurance to be paid, space to be rented, workers to be hired, and equipment to be bought. Regardless of whether the government or private contributions do the subsidizing, too few of those in charge recognize — or admit — that housing, education, and social services are all part of the social contract by which gangs control their communities. In all of these cases, they depend on the community's silence — via "survival contracts" — to continue their activity and to expand their control.

Recently there was a community cleanup in my neighborhood for children under 12. The white woman in charge of the cleanup, who was not familiar with the ways of the neighborhood, introduced me to the "good" kids who were going to do the work. They stood behind her, facing me. I had seen those boys "muling" (delivering drugs) and all of them wore smirks on their faces. Their shoes (colors and laces) signified identification with a local gang. They were "wannabees" — kids trying to impress the gang enough so that they'd be invited to join. I would not be surprised if the local gang had ordered them to show up just so the neighborhood would know who ran things.

But there was one other little boy who stood, unsmiling, apart from the others. His clothes and shoes showed no gang affiliation and were shabbier and cheaper than the other boys'. I'd never seen him muling.

Afterwards, the woman invited me to go with them for free burgers a local merchant was supplying as a reward. The woman spent the meal explaining that the lone boy's failure to assimilate and mix with the other kids was no doubt due to deep psychological problems, possibly involving child abuse. His social skills, she continued, were seriously compromised.

As I watched adult drug dealers work nearby pay phones on the street behind her, the wannabees grinned and nudged each other. Both they and I knew that each of those men stood to earn $400 in a single night of street dealing, if business were only average. Business looked brisk for midday, and the kids knew some of that money would go to them for muling.

The woman continued telling me that she thought that one little boy — who was eating his meal a few chairs away from the others — was seriously at risk to join a gang, and that's why intervention programs were needed. She never even suspected that the little boy was doing his best to stay away from just that – gang involvement.

I saw him only once more, walking down the street by himself, carefully looking neither left nor right where drug dealers worked the streets.

He was too far away for me to reach without drawing attention.

Crack! I hope neither kind ever gets to him, the kind that's used or the kind that's fired from a gun.

Crack! I hope he stays on the floor with the lamp unplugged.

Crack! I hope wherever he is now, he's hearing better voices than that woman's or mine. But I think about him, because louder than my hopes or her dreams or the silence of the community, I hear that other sound: *Crack!* ◆

Camille Harper publishes The Strobe, *a community newsletter. She also serves on the advisory council of Project 21, sponsored by the National Center for Public Policy Research in Washington.*

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One last observation . . .

On Motorcycling and Virtue

I thought that the chief thing to be done in order to equal boys was to be learned and courageous. So I decided to study Greek and learn to manage a horse.

– Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Anita Blair ponders courage and femininity astride a 550cc, 4-cylinder Honda

I too thought virtues manly: to be smart, honest, strong, and brave. So to achieve virtue, I studied Greek and learned to ride a motorcycle.

Partly it was in my genes. My father rode motorcycles as a young man, starting in the '30s. Once, to make the most of a short furlough during World War II, he motorcycled from California to Virginia in three and a half days. In the '50s, we kids would sneak into his footlocker in the shed behind the house and inspect his jodhpurs (gentlemen riders never wore black leather), stowed under his old military uniform.

I did not study Greek until college, and I never got to ride a motorcycle by myself until I was 24. My first job after college was at a law firm where my bosses were speed wonks: they went for sports cars, airplanes, and motorcycles. At the firm picnic, one partner let me take his trail bike into the woods and over some logs. From then on, I had to have one.

For years I spent every dry weekend on my motorcycle — always a Honda, first a 350cc twin and later a 550cc, 4-cylinder. What I loved about riding was that it demanded perfect concentration. Let your mind leave the road for just a moment, and you'd certainly get hurt seriously, even killed. My brother (who rode Harleys) and I devised elaborate escape plans for "laying it down" without getting hurt.

As it does to all riders, the day came when I had to lay it down. After riding into the sun for several hours, I didn't see a car pulling out of a shady side street. The impact sheared off a one-half-inch thick piece of steel on the bike's frame, and it threw me into the road, where I rolled three times. Asphalt. Sky. Asphalt. Sky. Asphalt. Sky. The Honda was twisted but ridable, and I got away with only bruises and sprains. We limped home together.

Nearly getting killed does pump one full of adrenaline. I remarked to my brother that although I wasn't in any particular pain, I probably should take a couple of aspirin and go to bed.

"Gad, no!" he said. "Walk around. Keep moving. Don't go to bed until you absolutely have to. You're gonna hurt like hell tomorrow. If you lie down now, you'll stiffen up and it'll be that much worse."

He paused. "Wow. I just realized: Girls never get tackled or clobbered or knocked out, so they don't know what to do . . . ."

On the whole, though, my female ignorance detracted not a bit from the glory I gained that day.

What feat did Elizabeth Cady Stanton do to prove herself? Did she once ride 30 miles in hard rain, or dryly walk away from a spectacular spill? When she took up Homer, and saw the *aristeia* of Achilles, did she learn then that mere fearlessness does not equal courage? ◆

Anita Blair is executive vice president and general counsel of the Independent Women's Forum, which sponsors this publication.

Drawing by Agnes Aru

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*"Intrepid Tacklers of Feminist Pieties"**

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